

Epilogue

A grim look covered Frolaytia Capistrano's face back at New Caribbean Island.

The formidable foe of the Nitrogen Mirage had been defeated and the Baby Magnum was safe. The maintenance fleet's shredded central command, the Flagship 019, would apparently sink in due time, but they had received the white flag signal from the second ship which was now in command.

And yet Frolaytia felt no cheer.

There was nothing cheerful about this.

"Manhattan has...vanished from the map...?"

The state of the world had greatly changed while they fought.

Enough so that it felt irresponsible fighting these silly wars out here.

The young female officer on her laptop screen read off the report while looking like she did not understand what it meant.

"It is unknown how the Information Alliance's turmoil will spread to international society as a whole. There is even a risk of the clean war concept collapsing. Major, please prepare for the possibility of unpredictable battles. Please ensure the Baby Magnum is thoroughly maintained."

"Understood, Captain." Frolaytia adjusted the long, skinny kiseru in her mouth. "But even after a logical explanation, it's still hard to believe."

"Yes. I have no idea what is going on either."

The special clouds riding the westerlies would attack New York along the same route as a hurricane. The excitation of an Object's main cannon laser would fill thunderclouds with more energy than any natural cloud. Once they moved out over land, they would cause an unbelievable level of electrolytic corrosion which destroyed all the pipes, foundations, frameworks, etc. in the ground and caused the skyscrapers to collapse. Based on Quenser and Heivia's report, that was the plan put together by the Information Alliance's Piranirie Martini Smoky.

But that was not what had actually happened.

"Manhattan has vanished from the map." The Captain on the screen repeated herself as if to confirm something. "Jersey City and Brooklyn both moved aside as if clearing a path for Manhattan. We cannot possibly predict how many alterations they have made to New York as a whole."

"..."

"The island of Manhattan has left its original coordinates and is moving through the northern Atlantic at a steady rate of 40 knots. It is unclear how many of the reported bomb clouds there are, but 34 such clouds have disappeared from the radar as they approach Manhattan. Yes, we can only conclude that Manhattan fired on them with a powerful cannon."

All of it was utterly absurd, but they could not deny the data before them.

"Major, I find it hard to believe, but could this be...?"

This was the center of the Information Alliance home country.

It had the power to move on its own, it could fire a powerful cannon, and it had an energy source capable of powering both.

Frolaytia narrowed her eyes a bit at what that brought to mind.

The Information Alliance tried to use information to remain at the peak, but their greatest secret had just been revealed here.

The busty, silver-haired commander summed it up.

“The world’s largest Object.”

After saying that, Frolaytia shook her head.

This was on a ridiculous scale, but it was not completely without precedent.

History had proven what would happen here and that was why she questioned the Information Alliance’s sense.

(Even if it can move across the ocean, it’s still the same. Have they forgotten the fate of Asgard, that city of 5 million in the Northern Restricted Zone? They haven’t foolishly handed control over to a new generation, have they?)

“Let’s go over this one thing at a time.”

“Y-yes, Major.”

“This is more like a warship than anything. What we will tentatively call the Manhattan is an extraordinarily large Object and it used something to blow away the bomb clouds. You said there were 34 suspected clouds, didn’t you?”

“If the satellite information is accurate, Central Park split apart and something like a giant tower emerged at a diagonal angle. It is estimated to be nearly 4 kilometers in length. We suspect it is a railgun or coilgun that fires physical shells.”

That alone was extraordinary enough.

The scale was entirely different from the standard 50m Objects.

“The shells can’t be normal either. How were the 34 targets distributed?”

“They were spread out over a 150km square of the northern Atlantic.”

“So at the very least, this is something that can hit that wide an area with a single explosive blast. And the actual range might be even larger.”

“Th-that exceeds the limits of our existing weapons. In fact, it’s unclear if an Object’s main cannon or an old-fashioned MIRV would be able to spread definite destruction over that wide an area...”

“But the Manhattan has done it. Do not reject the data. Hopes will not turn aside shells.”

(The explosion covers a wide area, it takes 50 to 60 seconds to expand, it interferes with radio

communications, radar, and radio telescopes, it causes changes in the upper atmosphere, and a strange aurora was seen, suggesting it affects the ionosphere or magnetosphere. It caused no damage to aircraft, but is that really true?)

Frolaytia adjusted her kiseru and her eyes wandered a bit.

She shifted her focus inward and used all of her knowledge and experience to search for phrases that explained the phenomenon before her eyes.

"It's the reactor."

"An Object's reactor? But low-stability plasma cannons convert that energy into destructive power at the greatest possible efficiency and not even they can produce such a large-..."

"No," cut in Frolaytia. "The Manhattan's main cannon is probably a railgun. It takes the coal-based chemical fuel used in the JLevelMHD reactors, solidifies it into a pellet, and uses that extra-large barrel to fire that into the sky above the target coordinates. After, of course, processing it so it can be fired by a railgun."

"Wha-...?"

"It probably then fires a powerful laser beam on the fuel to trigger a rapid reaction. The target will probably be beyond the horizon, but we just saw more than we ever wanted to see of bending lasers. It may use the upper atmosphere for that. And when they do that outside of the high power magnetic lines of a reactor, just how big of an explosion do you think it will cause?"

"So it's an Object...that turns its reactor inside out...so the explosion will spread into the outside world...?"

Of course, that would not be all it could do.

That electromagnetically-launched reactor cannon was just one use of its reactor. After all, the Manhattan was many times larger than a 50m Object. It would be surprising if it had only one or two trump cards. For one thing, how many reactors did it even have?

That meant it could have any number of giant cannons.

They had to assume even this might not be its greatest trump card.

"But in that case, this problem is only going to get worse."

"Th-there's more?"

"Why did it set sail like a battleship?" Frolaytia cut to the heart of the issue. "It of course wanted to safely destroy those bomb clouds out at sea before they arrived on land. Or perhaps it wanted to leave their path in case it could not destroy all of them. ...But that does not explain why it is continuing out into the northern Atlantic even after blowing away the suspicious clouds. And I doubt it's anything as silly as taking a very long time to brake once it gets moving. It has to have a clear reason."

The Information Alliance's home country had revealed its true form to the world.

It may have begun as a preventative action, but they would not be satisfied until they could make up for that loss. Either the machines or the Martinis would change this crisis into an opportunity. They

would remake this event into something that left them glad they had revealed themselves now.

And in that case...

(Will they make unscheduled visits to Information Alliance territories around the world in order to intimidate the other world powers? That way they can claim they chose to visit the dangerous front line and were not dragged from safety by an enemy nation's irregular action.)

Frolaytia once more adjusted her kiseru as she lost herself in thought.

(But what is the Information Alliance's internal situation like right now? The reports from Quenser and the others said the administrative system itself was trying to erase Manhattan... So is this more than just the core of their home country? I'm curious about the Martini in charge of New York.)

"M-Major..."

"Where is the report from this time?"

"It might be against regulations to direct you outside the military network...but please look at this video sharing site. The video getting the most views is a statement from the Information Alliance."

"...?"

" 'We of the Manhattan 000 are fighting to protect the lives and dignity of all races and ethnicities looking for a home and protection. We will oppose anyone who stands in our way and use any means necessary.' " The person on the screen read off some kind of message in a trembling voice. " 'This is New York's problem. So the Manhattan 000 will not hold back and will use its greatest firepower to directly strike the core of the evil deployed at New Caribbean Island and the surrounding sea. We must attack them.' ...They're going to blow away the 37th, Major!!"

The ground shook violently.

The familiar green grass and trees were nowhere to be seen. Central Park, which had looked like an overgrown golf course, had split in two and something like a giant tower had stuck out at a diagonal angle.

It was a railgun and a laser beam.

The tower had two different types of cylinders attached to the top and bottom.

But did that girl understand that this set of two formed the electromagnetically-launched reactor cannon which was the main cannon of the extraordinary naval Object known as the Manhattan 000?

Several guard vehicles drove into what had been Central Park in order to separate Oh Ho Ho from the people screaming and running around in a disorderly panic. Their brakes screeched, their doors flew open, and men in black surrounded the small girl.

Something none of them understood was happening.

It had finally been set in motion.

But as the ringlet curl girl's eyes darted this way and that, she was not searching for the true identity of the Manhattan or the fate of the world.

It was something more personal.

Something more important.

"...ther..."

No matter how much she pictured that face in her head, she could not find it.

She was supposed to have met him here today.

She had returned to her home country in the hopes of spreading her wings.

She had done so much research and carefully selected what shops she wanted to visit.

They had agreed to meet here, so he had to be here.

This was exactly the agreed-upon time.

"Father!?"

No matter how much she yelled, there was no response.

Searching for an individual was useless when Central Park itself no longer existed.

Silver-haired and brown-skinned Lieutenant Colonel Lendy Farolito grabbed the girl's too-slender shoulders and half-forcibly shoved her into one bulletproof vehicle.

She was in charge of Juliet.

She controlled those secrets which bore the name of a noble girl from a classic play. If Capulet was still affected by the Martini Series's rampage, then could she act as a trump card?

!!Confidential!!

To Faith Organization Central.

Venerable Elder. I offer this to one of the unparalleled flower petals which together form our great and colorful blossom.

As you so wisely predicted, the situation has crossed a line.

First the Hariti in the mangroves of the Mekong District.

Then the Fenrir in the North American demilitarized line known as the Greater Canyon.

The reports of their defeat have greatly increased the social unrest in the Faith Organization safe countries. But now we have a major scandal in the Information Alliance home country. Really, Venerable Elder, your foresight never ceases to amaze me. As they are shaken by these great waves, the people seem unstable, but they are actually craving overwhelming leadership and the appearance of a transcendent being more than in any other age. If we make an effective strike now, we could solidify our foundation and spread religion more thoroughly around the world than ever before.

The Faith Organization has always been more threatened by domestic troubles than foreign

enemies. The idea of every religion living respectfully side by side sounds lovely, but many seek only their own faith and see any other as harmful. We never would have gathered together without a constant common external enemy to direct our hostility toward. It is sad indeed to see our comrades fighting amongst themselves instead of working daily toward the love of god.

We will break free of this situation.

We will strengthen ourselves to the point that we will not fall apart without an enemy.

That is the purpose of catastrophe. Even during Ragnarok, once the gods and demon king finish killing each other, the resurrected god of light and the other survivors are said to build a paradise up from the ashes. Venerable Elder, I am praying that you will take on the role of the absolute leader and transcendent being who appears after the fall. Please be prepared.

As for the situation inside the Information Alliance, our cooperators, who have maintained their fervent faith while remaining hidden and enduring oppression, have managed to spread our Ragnarok Script to the Capitalist Corporations without them knowing what it is, but I know you are concerned about the scope of the calamity. If it is insufficient, we are prepared to return that to the battlefield.

Yes.

A calamity for a calamity. One option here would be to return Skuld Silent-Third, the Faith Organization's greatest serial killer, to her position as a saint.

(The following is a handwritten text and signature.)

You have permission to immediately release the aforementioned individual.

May a peaceful holy age arrive to this sinful and impure world.

-Venerable Elder Tyrfing Boilermaker

And there was a non-Legitimacy Kingdom soldier on New Caribbean Island who did not have official permission to be there.

It was important not to forget that this had all begun with rescuing a sunken Capitalist Corporations submarine.

"Honestly..."

This man had been the captain of the submarine: Rigas Blackpassion.

Even if this was a chaotic situation and the Legitimacy Kingdom was shorthanded, his position was clearly abnormal when he walked freely out of the detention barracks which were locked up like a prison.

These days, it was not usual even at normal prisons for a crane fly-like drone to fly up to a cell's window and carry weapons or drugs inside. In Rigas's case, it had been a handgun, a lock picking tool, other small tools, and a satellite cellphone.

"Since I haven't been abandoned, I suppose we must have achieved our objective."

While calling someone with the phone, Rigas walked across the volcanic rock that looked like

crunchy chocolate.

"I would like to know the details once I regroup with you. It seems the timetable has entirely fallen apart, but how did you make a comeback from there? First of all, the initial plan was to let Piranirie have her victory and get away. The Legitimacy Kingdom was not supposed to defeat her."

He made his way to the designated coast.

The drone's signal could not reach all that far. The island looked remote and isolated, but his companions were hiding quite nearby.

"...So Manhattan is on the move."

The Capitalist Corporations determined everything through business.

And they were also aware that money could not be earned indefinitely. Even if the mint continued printing new bills, it would only cause the value of that currency to collapse. They would eventually reach the upper limit and they would arrive at a borderline where accumulating any more would be meaningless.

Also.

The Capitalist Corporations had glimpsed the possibility that, when the assets of the Legitimacy Kingdom, Information Alliance, Capitalist Corporations, and Faith Organization all reached their final amounts - the values that meant the end of the world - they might not be at the top. They were the experts who loved money more than anyone, but they could not reach the peak of that field. That was more than just humiliating. So they had reached the obvious conclusion.

They would destroy that borderline.

That way they could pass that upper limit and continue to earn more money.

And to do that, they were willing to smash this planet.

"Then the Ragnarok Script is still usable. The exposure of the Manhattan should have driven a wedge of suspicion between the Information Alliance's Capulet and Martini Series. If we drive them even further out of control, that crack will spread beyond repair. Now, it's time to profit."

He arrived at his extraction point.

A small submersible had covertly arrived on the dark shore and someone was waving his way.

Rigas smiled thinly and jogged toward it.

But something was not right.

They were acting odd.

And by the time he realized that, Rigas Blackpassion had moved too close.

The companion waving to him was entirely limp and someone behind him was clearly holding his arm and waving it for him.

Also, a bloody katana jutted out from the center of his gut.

“E-EEK...!?”

Rigas’s hips nearly gave out below him as the katana was slowly pulled out through his companion’s back. With nothing to support him, the limp corpse crumpled to the dark ground.

All that remained was a bizarre person.

It was a slender young man with silver hair and a black tailcoat. But he held a blade that was wet with a sinister red.

“Wh-who the hell are you...!?”

“Oh, did you get a peek of the nobility’s dark side? I can forget that people from other world powers don’t expect this kind of thing.”

The young man did not seem to mind.

He made it sound like he was only a mild case and was completely oblivious to the fact that he was proving just how abnormal nobles were as a whole.

“This was originally a civilian bluefin tuna breeding base I had built. It is true had given Tia-chan permission to stay here, but imagine my surprise when I bring my favorite Paris sushi chefs here for a visit. I do not recall inviting these suspicious individuals to my sushi party.”

“...”

“Well, knowing Tia-chan, it’s probably just the usual trouble. And by this point, I am rather irritated as well. No matter how much I study the art of the blade, I just can’t seem to save my cute little sister from her family situation. I doubt an outsider like you would understand, but you are the one that intruded. So I will have my say. ...Do not place too great a burden on that girl. Unless you want me to kill you.”

By that point, Rigas had been entirely swallowed up.

Swallowed up by those indecipherable monsters known as nobles who existed near the top the Legitimacy Kingdom.

And that may not have been the wrong way to view this.

If he had simply raised his hands in surrender, it may have ended here.

“The Ragnarok Script and a Martini Series rampage, hm? That all sounds fascinating, so could you tell me more? I know it won’t accomplish much, but as her Onii-chan, I want to help Tia-chan as much as I can.”

“Ha...ha...”

Before breaking out, Rigas had been given a card-sized handgun that only held two 9mm rounds. Still, a gun had an absolute advantage over a sword. They were about 7 meters apart, so he would clearly act faster. He could deliver a fatal blow before the young man could get close.

He saw no armed subordinates or bodyguards in the area.

All he had to do was kill this katana-wielding young man.

“Owaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhh!!”

That was why Rigas Blackpassion took emergency action while roaring to motivate himself.

The silver-haired young man shut one eye.

And the grim reaper named Bloodrics Capistrano gave his pronouncement.

“I think I’ll start with that right arm.”

Everyone had underestimated his skill.

The many bodyguards had surrounded that silver-haired young man because he had a bad habit of going too far when he was alone.

“Dammit, they’re coming...”

Once a war left the pre-established harmony, not even the people involved could determine how it ended.

“They’re coming!!!???”

A bog of a conflict was forming with all four world powers complexly intertwined.

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